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Children's Book Guild News



the
Children's
Book Guild
of Washington, D.C.
Since 1945

Monthly News

Authors • Illustrators • Children's Literature Specialists

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Wednesday, October 26, 2016

Pages

[Home](#)

[Guild Member Blogs](#)

[Busboys and Poets](#)

[Monthly Luncheon Schedule](#)

[How to RSVP](#)

About Me



Monthly News

The Children's Book Guild of Washington, DC is a professional organization of authors, illustrators and children's literature specialists promoting high standards in children's literature since 1945. Visit us at <http://www.childrensbookguild.org/>

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November 2016

E-BOOKS: WHAT'S GOING ON? TIM DITLOW, VICE PRESIDENT OF EPIC!



Tim Ditlow grew up in the recording industry, as his parents were pioneers of the spoken-word business and founded Listening Library in 1955. Inspired by that lifelong interest in stories, Ditlow has worked in children's audio and book publishing for more than 35 years as a director, producer and publisher.

Ditlow joined Amazon from Random House, where he served as publisher of the audio imprint Listening

Library, acquiring and producing a catalog that included Philip Pullman's "His Dark Material" trilogy, *The Book Thief*, *Twilight*, the "Magic Tree House" series and, notably, all seven Harry Potter titles. His audio titles have received numerous industry awards, including seven Grammy nominations and two Grammy awards. He was recognized by the White House for his work on the Year of the Young Reader and currently serves on the board of the Educational Book and Media Association.

In a prior role with Brilliance Audio (an Amazon subsidiary), Ditlow established a children's and teen publishing program that grew to more than 400 audiobooks and was home to such top authors as Kate DiCamillo, John Green, Jacqueline Woodson, Megan McDonald and Rick Riordan.

At Amazon Children's Publishing, Ditlow launched the company's young adult book imprint, Skyscape, with a debut list featuring the

bestselling “Breathing” series, by Rebecca Donovan; the “Snow White” trilogy, by Salla Simukka; and the “Penryn and the End of Days” trilogy, by Susan Ee.

Ditlow has been working since 2014 with more than 150 children's publishers to curate a collection for Epic!, a children's subscription service that gives young readers access to more than 15,000 e-books and e-audiobooks. Epic! has become the leading children's subscription platform, and its subscribers are now reading six million titles monthly. In his role as vice president of content, Ditlow has seen firsthand the impact that streaming e-books into the classroom and home has had on reading habits.

Curiously, while Epic! has been expanding, sales of children's print books have been growing by double digits--one of the brightest spots in publishing (outside of coloring books for adults!). At the same time, sales of children's e-books have been dropping double digits. Next month, Eric Carle's *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* will be available for the first time in e-book format, but many bestselling children's books have not yet been converted. Why is this? Ditlow will discuss how changes in the digital book market are affecting authors, publishers, agents, librarians and booksellers. He looks forward to returning to the Guild.

Date: Thursday, November 17

Time: 11:30 a.m. "social hour"; noon luncheon

Place: [Busboys and Poets](#)

1025 Fifth Street NW (at K Street)

Menu: All choices \$25 (\$26 when paid online via PayPal)

:: CHOICE OF SANDWICH (all sandwiches served with a salad of baby greens and house-made kettle chips) ::

- Falafel sandwich (vegetarian/vegan) with house-made hummus, cucumbers, lettuce, tomato and onion on whole-wheat pita, served with tahini sauce (vegan without tahini sauce)
- Honey-roasted turkey sandwich with Havarti cheese, Dijonnaise, lettuce, tomato and onion on wheat bread

- Grilled-chicken panini with chipotle mayo, caramelized onions, pepper jack, lettuce and tomato on ciabatta
- Avocado panini with roasted red peppers and melted cheese on multi-grain bread

[RSVP Now!](#)

IN THIS ISSUE:

- 1. Member Nomination: Alexis Frederick-Frost**
- 2. Kristen McLean on Trends in Children's Publishing**
- 3. Frostburg's Storybook Holiday**
- 4. Member News**

MEMBER NOMINATION: ALEXIS FREDERICK-FROST

Gareth Hinds nominates author-illustrator Alexis Frederick- Frost for membership in the Children's Book Guild. Jacqueline Jules seconds the nomination.

Alexis Frederick-Frost is co-author and illustrator of the



popular *Adventures in Cartooning* series, published by First Second Books. He, James Sturm and Andrew Arnold create graphic novels that have won praise for their unique combination of vibrant art, engaging storytelling and informative content.

Booklist named *Adventures in Cartooning: How to Turn Your Doodles into Comics* a Top-Ten Graphic Novel for Youth and a Top-Ten Art Book for Kids. Its starred

review described this boundary-blurring book as “a rather stupendous new high for children’s graphic novels ... it’s a supremely worthy spiritual legacy to Scott McCloud’s seminal *Understanding Comics*.” Additional accolades include several state book awards and recognition by librarians and library associations (ALA Notable Children’s Books and the New York Public Library’s Book for Reading and Sharing). Three companion graphic novels, *Adventures in Cartooning: Characters in Action*, *Adventures in Cartooning: Activity Book* and *Adventures in Cartooning: Christmas Special*, provide additional inspiration for aspiring cartoonists.



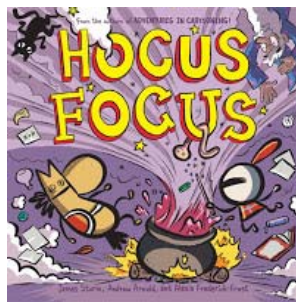
Alexis’s most recent projects include a series of genre-expanding publications that use sequential art in a picture book format. Featuring characters established in the *Adventures in Cartooning* graphic novels, these picture books employ a simplified panel structure and accessible writing to appeal to beginning readers. Illustrated end papers provide instructions for drawing the

main characters, thus inspiring a new generation of illustrators to continue the story, just as Alexis was inspired by Ed Emberley as a child. Currently, three of these books have been published by First Second Books: *The Sleepless Knight*, *Gryphons Aren’t So Great*, and *Ogres Awake*. A fourth book, *Hocus Focus*, will be out in 2017.

Since moving to Gaithersburg, Md., two years ago, Alexis has become an active participant in regional literary and comic festivals. He has been a panelist at the Maryland Association of School Librarians Conference and the Washington, D.C., Comic Convention, a guest speaker at the Gaithersburg Book Festival and an exhibitor at the Baltimore Comic Convention and the Small Press Expo in Bethesda, Md. Additionally, he has given presentations at local elementary schools and has participated in school visits organized by the Open Book Foundation.



Alexis spends countless hours alone hunched over his drawing table or staring at a computer screen. Whereas this solitary work environment is the lot of many writers and illustrators, it can be detrimental to the creative process. Ideas struggle to bloom in isolation. Tapping into local communities of authors and illustrators has been, and will continue to be, critical to his process, regardless of the state or country in which he



resides. Meeting fellow graphic novelist Gareth Hinds after moving to the D.C. area was both a personal and professional privilege. Through Gareth, Alexis was introduced to the Children's Book Guild. He found that he returned home after Guild luncheons with both a full belly and a head brimming with ideas. He is thrilled to be a nominee for inclusion into this vibrant community of creative people and would value the opportunity to contribute to its spirit of openness and camaraderie.

TALES FROM A DATA STORYTELLER: KRISTEN MCLEAN READS THE NUMBERS TO TRACK TRENDS IN CHILDREN'S PUBLISHING

by J. H. Diehl

Kristen McLean, the featured speaker at the October Children's Book Guild meeting, gave a fascinating talk about how she uses data to highlight trends in family media consumption, kids' reading habits and the children's book publishing industry.

A self-described "data storyteller," McLean is director of New Business Development for Nielsen Book, a division of the media research company Nielsen Entertainment. "It's not about the data," she said of the massive amount of information she reviews. "It's about the stories." The stories, she said, reveal "why people do what they do and why, in retail situations, people buy books."

McLean used a series of graphs to illustrate her review of children's book sales going back more than a decade. "Children's books are the most important place to look at the future of literacy," she said. Studies show that if kids keep reading in the middle grades, even if they drop off during their teens, they will resume reading in their twenties, McLean pointed out.

Despite anxiety about the fate of printed books during the recent recession, they are currently outperforming sales of digital books. She offered two main reasons that print books remain more popular. First, kids have higher expectations from their experiences of digital media than e-book formats can offer. Second, parents want print books for kids. "In 2010, the question was, would kids be reading now. I'm happy to say they are. Kids are still reading. Sales are up. Board books as a category are exploding." McLean noted that board-book sales have grown 13 percent in the last six years.

For her most recent study of who is buying and reading children's books, McLean analyzed the habits of 72,000 families. She divided book-buying families by the ages of their children and also by their core media interests. For the purposes of her Guild talk, McLean focused on families purchasing books for children ages five to eight. This segment of the U.S. market accounts for 38 percent of children's book sales each year, and 39 percent of the dollars spent on children's books. For authors, she said, "middle grade writing is a strong place to be right now."

McLean's study divided the families into four groups according to their media consumption: "disengaged," or mainly non-reading families; "gamers," in which both the adults' and kids' main interest in media is games; "social omnivores," for whom books are one of many types of media both adults and kids use; and "avid readers," who are the core current book customers, who value books and borrow books from libraries.

McLean described the broad characteristics Nielsen attributes to the demographics of each of these groups and focused most of her attention on so-called avid readers and social omnivores. It is in this last group that she sees the most potential for future growth in children's book buying and reading. "Beyond our core book buyers, there is an emerging group of social omnivores," she said, "highly stimulating households who value books."

In her study, the adults in these families often mentioned stresses they felt about parenting and worries about failing their kids. These parents also tended to place limits on kids' use of technologies, although "social omnivores are using all media," McLean explained: "TV, movies, social media, print books, e-books and magazines." Families that Nielsen calls social omnivores tend to have higher education and income levels and two parents working. They are less likely to be white, more likely to be multi-ethnic, are clustered near the East and West Coasts and Chicago, and have higher rates of home ownership, McLean said.

In the next part of her talk, McLean discussed trends in children's book sales and publishing. Every six months, she reviews what is trending up and down. To identify a trend, she looks for popular categories in which a single book is not responsible for driving sales, and in which she can look back a year and see growth. She bases her analyses on data from Bookscan, which includes sales from about 85 percent of the book market.

Current popular categories include media-tie-in books (relating to movies or TV shows) and books about holidays and celebrations. "Parents are investing in books that create warm fuzzy feelings," she said of the increasing sales for holiday titles. "Books are seen as an affordable investment for creating family togetherness, primarily driven by Christmas." McLean has also seen an explosive growth pattern in middle grade comic and graphic novels. She thinks this category will grow to take up more of the market.

Independent bookstores are doing well at selling children's books, she said, especially nonfiction. Most of the recent growth in nonfiction sales reflects kids' interests and passions: activity books, coloring books, books about games such as Minecraft, study aids such as Mind Quest, concept books about numbers and shapes, and humorous books. The following have also sold well recently: books about robots or time travel, activity books, religious books, bedtime and dream stories, books emphasizing girl power and several titles about books and libraries.

Another trend McLean identified among children's book publishers is an interest in properties and stories that can be published across different media, in film, for TV and in book form. The industry is always evolving, producing new data and creating new stories for McLean to discover and tell.

STORYBOOK HOLIDAY 2016



Bundle up and join in the winter festivities at the 13th annual Storybook Holiday, on Saturday, December 3, 2016! The small and friendly town of Frostburg will be turned into a winter wonderland for a day that kicks off with a scrumptious "Breakfast with the Elves" (tickets purchased prior to event) and a festive parade. Plenty of holiday activities will be available at City Place and Broadway Parking Lot as well as in the Main Street area. Children will have the opportunity to interact with this year's featured author/illustrator, Lee Harper. End the day by purchasing a ticket (in advance at

Main Street Books) for this year's classic film, *Miracle on 34th Street*, shown at Frostburg's Palace Theatre. Make sure you don't miss out on this wonderful event. For more information, please contact the Children's Literature Centre at clc@frostburg.edu or (301) 687-3133. Check out the centre's webpage (www.frostburg.edu/clc) and visit the centre on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/clcfsu/>).

MEMBER NEWS



TAMMAR STEIN'S middle grade novel *Six-Day Hero*, which Kar-Ben will release on January 1, is a Junior Library Guild selection.

PAMELA EHRENBERG and ERICA S. PERL have received grants from the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities.



Erica's novel *The Capybara Conspiracy* was released on October 11. She

will be presenting at Politics and Prose on November 16. Also, Erica's book *When Life Gives You O.J.* recently came out in a fully illustrated Korean edition.

JANE HARRINGTON writes: "I'm teaching at Washington and Lee University come January, one class in fiction writing and another in children's literature. I'm focusing the latter mainly on Grimm, the reading and analysis of the original tales *and* a look at modern (e.g., picture book) retellings/reimaginings of Grimm stories or themes. To that end, I welcome suggestions from the pros at the Guild. We'll be using our local libraries to a great extent for the picture books, etc., but I can buy any recommended books that I can't find locally. I'm also thinking that it would be nice to have a children's author visit my classes (both the writing and the lit), preferably someone who could connect her/his work to Grimm, but that isn't entirely necessary. If anyone can help me out in any of these ways, my email address is janejharrington@gmail.com."



JACQUELINE JULES is delighted to announce that she has a poem entitled "Pigeon" in the anthology *One Minute Till Bedtime*, edited by the former children's poet laureate Kenn Nesbitt and published by Little, Brown. In a starred review, *Kirkus* called *One Minute Till Bedtime* "a dreamy collection of bedtime poems and witty illustrations."



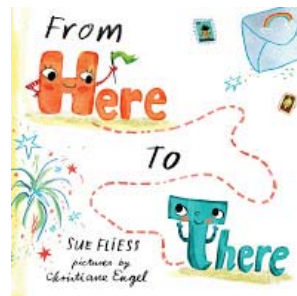
On November 8, Clarion will release *Florence Nightingale: The Courageous Life of the Legendary Nurse*, a young adult biography by CATHERINE REEF. *Florence Nightingale* has received starred reviews in *Booklist*, *Kirkus*, *The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books*, and *Publishers Weekly*. It is a Junior Library Guild selection, and way back in February it was the Idaho Commission for Libraries' Nonfiction Book of the Month.



ELISA CARBONE's new picture book, *Diana's White House Garden* (Viking, 2016), follows the real Diana Hopkins through her mischievous days as the only child living in the Roosevelt White House in 1943, and her experience as the poster child for the beginning of the wartime Victory Garden movement. The *New York Times Book Review* called it "A cheerful mix of gardening, history and patriotism." Elisa and the real Diana, now in her 80s, have been invited to attend the National Press Club Book Fair and Authors' Night, on November 18.



LEZLIE EVANS's 2007 picture book, *The Bunnies' Picnic*, published by Disney-Hyperion, has been picked up by Scholastic and will be featured in their spring book club.



SUE FLIESS's new book, *From Here to There*, will be released on November 29 by Albert Whitman & Co. Here and There can never be together because Here is always here and There is always there. So they become pen pals and write to each other all the time. Then one day, There gets an idea that could change the distance between them forever.



Last month this newsletter announced that *Burn Baby Burn*, by MEG MEDINA, was long listed for the National Book Award along with *Booked*, by KWAME ALEXANDER. *Burn Baby Burn* has also been short listed for the Kirkus Prize for Young Readers' Literature. All Kirkus Prize winners will be announced on Thursday, November 3, at the Texas Book Festival. In


addition, *Burn Baby Burn* was recently named the YA book of the year by the New Atlantic Independent Booksellers Association.

NOTE ABOUT THE CHILDREN'S BOOK GUILD NEWS: Would you rather print your newsletter than read it online? Current and past issues are now available for printing on the Guild's website at <http://www.childrensbookguild.org/guild-newsletters>. Look for the "Newsletter" tab on the left side of the Guild website. There is also a "Printer Friendly Version" link on the top left-hand side of this blog.

LITERARY EVENTS SPONSORED BY POLITICS AND PROSE: The literary calendar at Politics and Prose lists many upcoming programs that may be of interest to Children's Book Guild members: <http://www.politics-prose.com/events>. October's speakers include ERICA PERL and Jeff Kinney.

And remember, Politics & Prose is now the bookstore at the 5th and K Streets location of Busboys & Poets. Politics & Prose plans to have copies of our featured speakers' books available for purchase at this location on meeting dates whenever possible.

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